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ABSTRACT

Based on a longer report with the same title, this digest summarizes what college faculty can do to improve their teaching. It maintains that faculty need to stop viewing college teaching as "covering the content" and start viewing it as "helping students learn." To help faculty achieve such an instructional transformation, numerous faculty development programs and professionals promote the development of expertise in teaching. Six categories of teaching models are highlighted: assessment and feedback, discussion and sharing, dissemination, clinical development, teaching and learning, and instructional planning. The models include Classroom Assessment, the Great Teachers Seminar, the Integration of Teaching and Learning Styles, the Instructional Skills Workshop, Adaptive Control of Thought, Multiple Intelligences and Teaching, Instructional Event Design, and the Five-Step Process for Improving Teaching. These and other models similarly designed to enhance learning offer specific procedures that can be implemented easily, without formal training. (MDM)

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Models for Improving College Teaching
A Faculty Resource

Jon E. Travis

Colleges and universities increasingly are investing attention and energy on issues related to teaching and learning. Institutions may be reacting to public demands for improved student outcomes or criticism of dominant research agendas. Still, because of the service they provide, some institutions of higher education may be focusing more on teaching and learning out of genuine concern and a sense of responsibility to students. Whether the motivation stems from a disturbed populace or a recognized obligation, colleges are making a commitment to improve student learning.

How well institutions respond to this "new" teaching and learning agenda may be a matter of debate, especially if some of the following criteria are considered: tangible rewards for good teaching, public recognition of faculty, resource centers for instructional development, credit for research and publication of teaching issues, and preparation of graduate students for college teaching (Halpern and Associates 1994). However an individual institution approaches such issues, faculty still bear the major responsibility for student learning (Davis 1993). Hence, faculty are expected to inspire an instructional renaissance (Svinicki 1990). As a consequence, faculty may renew their own commitment to lifelong learning and rekindle once again the excitement of discovery.

What Can Faculty Do To Enhance Student' Learning?

As learning becomes more complex, students frequently depend upon faculty to assist them with a multitude of obstacles. Yet, given the typical preparation college faculty receive for teaching, the tendency to concentrate on presentational methods, like the lecture, can aggravate students' difficulties with learning. Consequently, instructors are encouraged to stop viewing teaching as 'covering the content' and to start viewing it as "helping the students learn" (Svinicki 1990, p. 7). Such a change in process orientation can lead to a focus on understanding how people learn and the variables and variations of learning that are possible, which can be accomplished through the use of resources designed to facilitate learning by transforming college teaching.

What Resources Exist That Can Help Faculty Improve Learning?

To help faculty achieve such an instructional transformation, numerous faculty development programs and professionals promote the development of expertise in teaching. Supporting an array of initiatives, such as instructional grants, workshops and discussion groups, classroom observation, and microteaching, faculty development efforts enable instructors to consider adaptations to their teaching (Weimer 1990). In addition, reference and research information, hardware technology and support, and advisory personnel can augment existing resources. Each opportunity is intended to offer faculty insight into the significant accumulation of knowledge about teaching and learning (Menges, Weimer, and Associates 1996). Among the resources available for faculty is an array of innovative improvement strategies and classroom methods, such as cooperative learning, case method, test feedback, and videotaping. Some of these strategies have a formal structure, an

extensive research base, and applicability to almost any discipline. Such strategies have been described as "teaching improvement models" (Svinicki 1990).

What Additional Resources Might Faculty Need to Promote Learning?

While these resources, strategies, and models can be beneficial for enhancing learning, the hardworking faculty member in higher education, who often is faced with increasing demands to do more and to be more effective, may not be able to review this vast and diffuse assortment of options (Svinicki 1990). Challenged daily to fulfill their institutional requirements and to meet the needs of a diverse group of students, faculty should have a selection of innovative teaching and learning techniques in an easy-to-use format. Although some faculty development programs may support projects to disseminate information on one or two teaching improvement models, the tendency to group such models for discussion and selection, much like a menu, is rare. Hence, a comprehensive and concise compilation of teaching improvement models could provide faculty with a useful resource not previously available.

What Are Some of the Models Included in This Collection?

The teaching improvement models included in this report were selected on the basis of their relative novelty for faculty, compared to more familiar strategies like writing-across-the-curriculum or simulation. The collection comprises six categories of models: models for assessment and feedback, discussion and sharing, dissemination, clinical development, teaching and learning, and instructional planning. The models include Classroom Assessment, the Great Teachers Seminar, the Integration of Teaching and Learning Styles, the Instructional Skills Workshop, Adaptive Control of Thought, Multiple Intelligences and Teaching, Instructional Event Design, and the Five-Step Process for Improving Teaching. These and other models similarly designed to enhance learning offer specific procedures that can be implemented easily, without formal training.

What Are the Teaching Improvement Models Designed to Do?

One purpose of this collection is to encourage faculty to reflect on the learning process and on the influence of their teaching. Each model selected for improving college teaching was originally designed to meet a distinct faculty need, whether feedback from students, the opportunity to share thoughts and strategies with peers, or the collection and dissemination of ideas among faculty. Other models focus on instructional improvement in a secure environment, course and curriculum design, and an understanding of learning theory and various learning styles.

Why Should College Faculty Consider or Implement These Models?

Higher education in the United States has been challenged to improve students' learning experiences. Given sufficient support and resources, college and university faculty have the capability to enhance their students' learning. The models in this collection offer faculty an assortment of resources to use in this endeavor.

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